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STATE FOR WHA/AND P.FRENCH AND L.PETRONI  
NSC FOR D. FISK

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL ECON BL

SUBJECT: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY STALEMATE CONTINUES

REF: A. LA PAZ 2415

1B. LA PAZ 2418

11. (U) Most political and media analysts describe the regional September 8 strike as a success (see September 8 ASDAR), but the Constituent Assembly remains deadlocked, at least for the moment, over whether delegates should use a simple majority or two-thirds vote to approve constitutional changes. Organizers of the strike, who favor a two-thirds vote, declared a "truce" September 9 but will reevaluate their position on September 14 if the MAS continues to insist on a simple majority. The Assembly's governing board will resume negotiations September 11 to be followed by a meeting of Assembly party leaders September 12, just before the plenary resumes session.

12. (SBU) One opposition Assembly delegate told us he is sanguine regarding the negotiations, but said that the GOB, which has kept MAS delegates on a short leash, "will have to give." The GOB said September 10 that it is willing to change the rules of order in partial response to opposition demands; nonetheless, there has been no change in the MAS position on a simple majority. President Morales said September 9 that "absolute majority is democracy," and that "in indigenous communities, majorities and minorities don't exist, but consensus." He again argued that the two-thirds vote mentioned in the Assembly's enabling legislation refers only to a one-time vote on the final constitution, not to its individual provisions. (Note: The enabling legislation is in fact ambiguous on this point. End note). Morales added if the final two-thirds vote fails, the GOB will take the new constitution directly to the people for their approval.

13. (SBU) National Unity (UN) leader Samuel Doria Medina has told the Ambassador that opposition and MAS delegates had worked over the weekend in an effort to craft a compromise. While no deal was reached, Doria Medina was optimistic that a deal could be worked out if both sides were prepared to be "creative."

14. (SBU) Comment: News reports showing more prosperous Santa Cruz youth preventing poor indigenous residents from working September 8 are not likely to engender sympathy for the

opposition's cause, particularly in the Altiplano. For now, a stalemate persists between the MAS and the opposition. Still, the strike ended after 24 hours and negotiations continue, leaving some room for cautious optimism. End comment.

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